

584 woman sends them to her family. Distant relatives fulfill their obligations by bringing meat or fish, and nowadays also money or some small present, which is not included in the bride price.

The husband's gifts consist of a small knife and a few (5) arrows (at the time of the Independent State a bundle of copper wires called ngelo or mitako and at the present time 5 or 10 francs, for example). These presents from the husband are not bosambelo, for he does not give his fiancée his hand; they are yékola (greeting) and are not part of the bride price. The woman sends them to her parents.

591 If the husband does not yet have a house or cultivated fields of his own, [138] as was formerly often the case, (1) the engaged couple

• [736]

1. Orphans were almost the only ones who had their own houses and cultivated fields. Of course, we are not speaking of men who were previously married.

live in the hut of the parents for the time being. The woman obtains food from her mother-in-law's fields and prepares it at the hearth of the latter, until the young man has built his hut and established his own fields.

Nowadays it no longer happens that a young man who wants to take a wife still lacks his own house. From the time of puberty on, young men moved by the desire for freedom leave the parental home and build huts for themselves where they can live alone or with some companion or other and enjoy their freedom.

6. The life of the engaged couple

584 The bompaka lives in the home of her husband, goes there to talk to him and to sleep with him. During the first three or four days she does not work, unless she is a very active person. Subsequently she takes care of all the household tasks and prepares meals at the hearth under the supervision of her mother-in-law. Only after a few weeks, when she has become accustomed to her new way of living, is she introduced to the customs of her new family; only

Article VI. The Economic Position of a Widow

736 As long as her seclusion lasts, a widow continues to live
768 with the family of her deceased husband. She supplies herself with food from the crops she has grown. The tools her husband has given her remain in her hands, and she makes use of them as soon as she can. As to the various utensils which must be destroyed, they are replaced by others lent her by the family of the deceased, for she may no longer use those which served her in her husband's lifetime.

In order to better express the magnitude of their mourning, the Nkundó often refrain [441] from using the products of the farms established by the deceased. Therefore, instead of continuing to cultivate the existing crops of manioc and vegetables, the widow prefers to seek provisions in the fields of the close relatives of the deceased. Or a man who has already chosen her may place his fields at her disposal. If neither of these sources is available and she wishes to observe the rule rigorously, she must purchase what she needs in this realm.

736 As we have seen in Chapter VI, Article II, a widow has no
768 claim to the fruits of her labors. Neither the money she has earned
421 and which is intended for the common needs of the household, nor the crops she has set up, nor the fish she has caught, nor the caterpillars she has gathered in the forest belong to her. Everything goes to the heirs. Her property is limited to objects she may have received as her personal share in her daughter's bride price, or as some other payment belonging exclusively to the mother.

If the widow remains in the family of the deceased, however, her fields, tools, etc., are left to her, for under those conditions there is no reason to take them away from her. But if she [787] remarries elsewhere, the heirs are pitiless. A Nkundó does not want the family wealth to be scattered or squandered in any way. The law says lokutu lókfó lófótsw'inyamó, "our patrimony can not be alienated."

736 In point of fact the widow is treated more favorably, at
768 least in the best instances. If her relations with the family have been good, they will not refuse her some small object that she

736 may wish to keep. In exemplary unions she is allowed to keep
768 the mats she has woven with her own hands, and the goods she received from her husband -- fabrics, beads, hens, even goats and dogs, and even sometimes what she has acquired through joint efforts with her husband (crops, livestock) -- are divided equally. The division is usually carried out with a generous attitude toward the widow, and if there is only one object of a kind the tendency is to let her have it. [442] Such conduct springs from pure generosity, for -- as has already been said -- the woman has absolutely no claim. In the past it followed only upon extraordinarily happy unions, and particularly in consideration of the relationship between the two families and the affection of one of the immediate heirs for the widow.

736 At the present time the influence of the missions is increasing
768 the number of instances of generosity toward the widow and starting
797 an inclination to make it a general rule. Thus good Christian families -- if they are not thwarted by their pagan relatives -- leave the widow those objects she personally used, such as clothing, utensils, a trunk, and even a sewing machine.

Article VII. Economic Effects of Death

1. Bride price and dowry

768 The death of one of the spouses dissolves a marriage only
583^x from a certain point of view and only as a union between two specific individuals. A marriage is absolutely broken only by the death of both spouses (or by divorce).

Unlike divorce death does not bring about any repayment either of the bride price or of the dowry (nkqmf). When the wife dies, all these payments remain in the hands of the respective parties. When a husband dies, the widow continues to belong to the heirs; she is part of the inheritance. The children belong to the father and his family; no new payment for them is necessary.